

My Dear Mrs. Manley, -

This article from the May Atlantic Monthly might have been escaped by you. I thought it would interest you.

Kindest Regards

J. R. Rosenberg

BALANCE SHEET IN RACE RELATIONS

by EDWIN R. EMBREE

DEMOCRACY in human relations is gripping the American mind and conscience. Next to the war, questions about Negroes and other minorities are the most discussed topics in forums, drawing rooms, and bars.

Aside from morals and ethics, we begin to see that our racial patterns are hurting our economy and handicapping us in winning the war: keeping us from full use of Negro labor and fighting power, breaking the morale of the millions who make up our minority groups, shaking the trust of our democratic allies. We begin to realize — uneasily — that over two thirds of the people of the earth are colored and that these darker peoples are swiftly rising to power in industry and arms.

Negroes have found special significance in the war. It has given them opportunities they have never had but it has sharpened their sense of the clash between American creed and American practice. Negroes want to fight for democracy, but they see the issues quite as plainly in America as abroad. They are no longer satisfied with the epitaph suggested by one colored rookie: "Here lies a black man killed fighting a yellow man for the glory of a white man." Negroes want to help beat Japan and Germany. But they want democracy to win at home too. And they want it now. Many thoughtful Americans agree and are working with a zeal not shown since the movement which abolished slavery.

Other Americans are equally perturbed for opposite reasons. Fighting for the status quo, they are determined that the Negro shall "stay in his place." Many of them are distending their hate to take in whatever groups differ from them in race or religion.

Reared in Kentucky, EDWIN R. EMBREE graduated from Yale in 1906, was Vice President of the Rockefeller Foundation from 1917 to 1927, and since then has been President of the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Ever since the First World War he has specialized in the study of races. His several books, *Brown Americans*, *Indians of the Americas*, *13 Against the Odds*, *Island India Goes to School*, have established him as one of the fairest and most fearless authorities in the field.

Here is the current balance sheet in race relations as I see it. This review is not limited to any section, but applies to the country as a whole. Too often the North has been influenced by the slave traditions of the South, or has been so busy railing at the South that it has neglected its own faults in human relations.

DEBITS

THE most spectacular signs of the rising tide of intolerance are outbreaks against various minority groups: anti-Semitic attacks in New York, Boston, Chicago; the zoot-suit clash with Mexicans in Los Angeles; manhandling of Japanese-Americans. But the chief victims were Negroes: riots in Detroit, Beaumont, and Mobile; outbreaks in Newark and Dayton; violence on all kinds of public carriers throughout the South. In many cities Negroes were mauled by the police and stoned by "neighbors" for moving into new districts. A Negro in Mississippi was tortured and murdered by white men because he refused to sell his farm to one of them.

The most grotesque of the symptoms of clash were the rumors. Accepted and eagerly repeated as gospel fact — on the word of a friend, who had it direct from a cousin, who got it straight from a guy in the know — these rumors ran the gamut of fantasy: that the *Queen Mary*, setting out as a transport — from New York or Boston, or even New Orleans — had been seized by Negro troops in mutiny; that three bus lines in Chicago had been taken over by force by Negro drivers (as a matter of fact Negro drivers have been peaceably employed on buses and streetcars and subways in Chicago for months); that a white man slapped a Negro woman on Grand Boulevard; that a Negro slapped a white woman on Broadway; that a riot was going on at that very minute — on South Parkway, Chicago, on Rampart Street, New Orleans, in Harlem, in Little Tokyo; endless rumors of the Eleanor Clubs (gleefully whispered to be sponsored by Mrs. Roose-

velt), whose members, colored domestic servants, vowed to get "every white woman in her kitchen by Christmas"; the shovers or pushers or bumpers — clubs whose members were supposed to give one day every week to walking in crowded places and bumping white people; the disappointment clubs whose members were pledged to harass white women by promising to come to cook or clean on certain days and then not showing up.

But underlying causes of friction are deep-seated. Housing, always inadequate in black ghettos, has become intolerable with the new crowding. A million Negroes have migrated from the rural South since 1940, some of them to Southern cities but most to already congested centers in the North and West. In Chicago, with 350,000 Negroes, areas of the South Side Black Belt have 55,000 to 90,000 inhabitants per square mile herded into houses abandoned by their former owners, with poor sanitation and scant facilities for recreation. School buildings are so congested that many Negro children have to get their education in half-day shifts. With restrictive covenants and other quasi-legal devices keeping Negroes from any other quarters, landlords pile up the rents and let the buildings run down.

Funds available for housing for Negro defense workers in more than twenty-five Northern cities could not be used for over a year because of objection from white residents. In Detroit, where the 150,000 Negroes of the 1940 census have increased by 10 per cent every year during the war years, colored tenants could move into public housing built expressly for them only after crashing a picket line of white rioters. In Baltimore, where the numbers have jumped from 165,000 in 1940 to over 200,000 in 1944, an angry citizenry has refused to let Negroes move out of the established ghettos or have public housing.

Employment has been a constant fight. In spite of the President's orders and the vigilance of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, employers were slow to hire colored workers. Upgrading of Negro workers has brought on hate strikes and riots in dozens of centers, notably in Philadelphia, where the whole city's transportation was tied up for six days because eight Negroes were given jobs as motormen on trolleys; and at the Wright aeronautical plant in Lockland, Ohio, when 12,000 workers walked out because seven Negroes were transferred to a "white" department.

On the political front, Congress has refused to outlaw lynching and the poll tax, and has failed to provide Federal equalization of educational expenditures (the only thing that would bring education of Negroes — and whites — in the South to

something like national standard). Party machines in the Southern states, in spite of clear decisions by the Supreme Court, are still hunting means to keep Negro voters from the polls and the primaries.

Northern legislatures have threatened to penalize American citizens because of their ancestry — in this case, Japanese. Quite as bad as overt acts were the insulting speeches in the United States Congress, in many Southern legislatures, and in the hustings — speeches attacking not only Negroes, but Americans of Oriental ancestry, Jews, Catholics, "and other foreigners."

Minority groups themselves have not been guiltless. Catholics and Jews have often discriminated against Negroes. A Negro club in Philadelphia refused to admit a white minister to membership. When a Japanese-American was put alongside her, a Negro secretary walked off the job in Chicago as haughtily as any Nordic. Negroes and Mexicans vie in looking down on one another.

The police and the courts have not always shown fair play or justice. In riots Negroes have been arrested and punished in far greater numbers than white offenders. Police brutality against Negroes, even when they are in uniform, has become an open scandal. In Southern courts, judges often treat colored defendants with disdain or amusement, refuse to accept Negro testimony against whites, and tend to assume a Negro guilty until he is proved innocent. Juvenile delinquency has become alarming. White and Negro gangs have clashed on streets and public carriers in many cities.

In the news there has been suppression and distortion: the pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*, an authentic, scientific statement, was banned by the USO and the Army. *Strange Fruit*, the powerful novel by Lillian Smith, was censored in Boston as "obscene"; Gene Talmadge featured his (losing) campaign for Governor of Georgia by bonfires burning copies of *Brown America*; the USO press agent suppressed a photograph of Mrs. Roosevelt with the very dark Mrs. Bethune as "controversial."

Many white newspapers play up Negro crime and print almost no other Negro news. Most of the stories, radio skits, and motion pictures in which Negro characters appear follow the stereotypes of the happy clown, the criminal, and the "mammy." There has been little reporting of the many instances of Negro heroism in battle, while mess halls and officers' clubs have reeked with false rumors of Negro cowardice.

The Church, in spite of the central Christian doctrine of brotherhood, has almost universally continued to practice physical and spiritual segregation. The weak attitude of the Church and the

easily aroused prejudices of the masses have made it easy for vicious cults to use the Christian name in preaching hate of every minority group. *The Cross and the Flag*, *Bible Flashes*, *Crusading Mothers*, are among thirty-one publications and organizations exposed in detail by Henry Hoke in his survey entitled *Black Mail*.

Galling are the insults and uncertainties that individual Negroes face every day, never knowing when they may be admitted or thrown out at a theater, a restaurant, a hotel, a bathing beach. In Washington a Negro soldier who had lost a leg in Italy was refused service in Thompson's restaurant, two blocks from the White House. Negro troops in El Paso, Texas, were refused food in a station dining room where they could see German prisoners of war seated and receiving courteous service.

A little colored girl, asked to name fitting punishment for Hitler, said, "Make him black and make him live in America." Negroes are not the only sufferers. Americans of Spanish and Japanese descent face daily insult. A respected Chinese citizen of Chicago, Tom Y. Chan, was refused burial by the side of his wife because the cemetery now accepts only "white" bodies.

Resented most of all is discrimination in the armed forces. Negroes — and millions of other people the world over — simply cannot understand a war for democracy fought by an army organized on segregation and prejudice. *Time* states that 70 per cent of all Negro troops have been used for labor rather than combat. The training school for Negro pilots had to be built by private funds, and in spite of brilliant records abroad, Negroes are still little used in any of the air services. On leave, colored soldiers and sailors have been herded into restricted areas for their play; even in the combat zones of England they were Jim Crowed in the Red Cross recreation centers and insulted and sometimes beaten by their American fellows. An Englishwoman whose village had quartered chiefly colored troops said, "Oh, we all like the Americans, but those white folks from the States are terrible." The American Red Cross, in agreement with the Army and Navy, segregates the blood of Negro donors because of the deep-rooted sentiment of many people against giving plasma prepared from Negro blood to white servicemen, though there is no evidence of any chemical difference in the blood of the two.

Most shocking is the lethargy of the United States Army in allowing civilians to mob and sometimes murder soldiers in uniform if the soldiers have dark skins. Three soldiers from Camp Doren, Mississippi, were killed, one by the sheriff of Centerville and two by white civilians after one of the

soldiers answered "Yes" instead of "Yes, sir." Private Raymond McMurray was shot in a general roundup of "suspects" near Birmingham, Alabama. A soldier in Charleston, South Carolina, beaten and threatened with death by two civilian policemen, shouted, "Hell, shoot me! It's *your* country I'm supposed to die for, anyway."

CREDITS

IN SPITE of all, the war years have made a huge dent in the old patterns of race relations. There has been a tremendous gain for democracy. Never before in America have Negroes been given the opportunities they have today. And they are making the most of them.

Over 1,500,000 Negroes are in war industry, many of them in new trades. Over 2000 Negroes are employed in fifteen cities as streetcar conductors, motormen, and bus drivers. Certain railroads have upgraded waiters to stewards, and are employing Negro firemen for the first time in a generation. Over 200,000 are in the Federal civil service, chiefly as mail carriers and postal clerks. For 1944 the Labor Research Association reported 5,300,000 Negroes employed in civilian jobs — a million more than ever before in American history.

The greatest asset in employment is the new attitude of the unions. The Congress of Industrial Organizations is the strongest force against discrimination that has arisen in these fervid years. The older unions are not so aggressive, but they are feeling the new movement for a united front of all laborers. The Farmers' Union, not yet firmly established against the big landowners' organizations, is also committed to fair play for the Negro farmers and farm workers. Meanwhile, Negroes themselves have been working to increase their competence and establish good relationship with employers and fellow workers.

Even in the matter of decent living quarters some progress has come, chiefly in public housing. Of the 132,000 family units built by the Federal Housing Authority, 35 per cent have been made available to Negroes. In addition, 65,000 units for Negroes have been set up in special housing for war workers, and many other projects are under way. The National Association of Real Estate Boards has recommended prompt use of private initiative in providing houses for Negroes. In the battles for free living space, decisions against restrictive covenants have been given by judges in Chicago and California. Much of the recent public housing is interracial in theory and increasingly so in fact, notably in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Chicago.

Politically Negroes have gained stature and power. In the Northern and border states there are two and a half million qualified Negro voters — enough to be the balance of power in these states which carry the balance of power in the nation. Unsatisfied with the declarations of either party platform in 1944, the leaders of twenty-five national Negro organizations issued a joint statement of their demands — possibly the beginning of unity and of a political strategy which would give this group tremendous power. Following the Supreme Court decision in the Texas primary case, Negroes voted in Texas and Arkansas for the first time since Reconstruction days. Stirring up the race issue has proved no longer a way to get even white votes, as witness the recent defeat of such race baiters as Cotton Ed Smith of South Carolina, Eugene Talmadge of Georgia, and three members of the Dies Committee, including Dies himself. Attacks on the poll tax continue; Georgia abolished the tax in 1945, leaving only six Southern states still clinging to this device for cutting down the votes of both Negroes and the poorer whites.

The police and the courts have moved far toward democracy during the war years. Several cities and states in the North are revising their civil liberties laws, outlawing more strictly discrimination in any public facilities and services. New York State has just set up by strong legislative act a fair employment and anti-discrimination commission. Still more important, many individuals have been seeing to it that these laws are brought to the test; for others besides Negroes are excluded from restaurants and hotels in the North as well as in the South. With public approval Negro policemen have been appointed in more than eighteen Southern cities, and a large number have been added to the police forces of the North. Washington in recent years has increased its Negro officers from 42 to 135, and Chicago has just added 100 Negroes to the large number already serving. Certain cities, such as San Francisco, Washington, Passaic, and Louisville, have set up courses for the training of police in the handling of racial problems.

Following a recent Supreme Court decision, Negroes are regularly called to juries in several Southern states. The interpretation of the Southern segregation laws is tending toward the equality they are sworn to follow, as witness the compelling of white persons to give rightful space to Negroes on crowded buses in Norfolk, Virginia, and the payment of equal salaries to public school teachers in Louisville, New Orleans, and throughout the state of North Carolina.

While yellow journals still whoop it up for race

hate, a number of important papers and magazines have swung over to positive policies of fairness and appreciation for all minorities, notably *PM*, the *Philadelphia Record*, the *Chicago Sun*, *Life*, *Time*, and the *New Yorker*. Such Southern papers as the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, and the *Nashville Tennessean* continue their record of fair reporting and democratic statements. Editorials by Virginius Dabney in the Richmond paper advocated abolition of segregation on public carriers in Virginia. The *Atlanta Constitution* led the fight against Eugene Talmadge and his race baiting.

The *Atlanta Journal* has recently urged the rights of Negroes to employment, decent housing, good education, police protection and justice, and to participation in government with full voting rights in elections and primaries. The Georgia Press Association selected a frank statement on Negro rights in the *Calhoun Times* as the best editorial printed in a Georgia newspaper during 1943. National magazines are devoting many articles to Negro and minority problems. Books and pamphlets on the Negro and race relations have been in striking demand — the pamphlet, *The Races of Mankind*, the novels, *Strange Fruit* and *Freedom Road*, and Gunnar Myrdal's monumental study, *An American Dilemma*.

The Negro press has shot forward during the war years. It has correspondents overseas, and has finally succeeded in getting a direct representative into the President's press conferences. These papers have swung behind the labor movement, are aligning the Negro more and more with the rights of other minorities, and are stressing the American Negro's common concern with the colored peoples of the world.

The entertainment world has shown a fellowship untarnished by caste in many interracial plays and broadcasts and in running Stage Door Canteens with entertainers, hosts, and guests welcome regardless of race. Famous men and women of stage, screen, and radio have publicly demanded changed racial patterns: Helen Hayes, Orson Welles, Elsa Maxwell, Helen Gahagan, Walter Winchell. While movies have held pretty much to the old stereotypes, notable exceptions were *The Negro Soldier*, a short feature prepared by the Army, and *Americans All*, of the "March of Time" series. Negroes in the theater have achieved new status with *Carmen Jones*, *Anna Lucasta*, and Paul Robeson's *Othello* all running at the same time as smash hits in New York.

On the educational front, white students of all ages are working against racial inequalities. A junior high school group in Manhattan made microscopic tests of Negro and white blood to prove

them identical. Last year three white students enrolled at "colored" Fisk University in Nashville, and a colored student at the "white" Black Mountain College in North Carolina. A sensation was caused by the report of the State Director of Research that Negro seventh grade pupils in the public schools of Virginia outranked the white seventh-graders. St. Louis University in Missouri has opened its doors to colored students.

A special gain is the trickle of Negro teachers not only into their own schools and colleges but into the general educational system. Six hundred Negroes are teaching in the Chicago public schools and a large number in the regular schools of New York, not only in Harlem but all over the city. Universities have begun to appoint scholars irrespective of color, notably the University of Chicago, Harvard, Wayne, Smith, Toledo, and the colleges of New York City. Negro chemists and engineers have begun to appear in the research departments of great industries.

In communities all over the country, committees have been appointed to work on human relationships. Forty-one cities and states have set up official commissions. More than two hundred voluntary committees have sprung up from Boston to Los Angeles, from Minneapolis to Mobile.

The Church is stirred, seeing afresh the clash between its teaching and its practice. The American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church, the greatest of the agencies for the promotion of Negro education for almost a century, has swung into direct efforts in race relations. This agency held a three-week interracial institute in Nashville in the summer of 1944, the first of its kind in the South. The Southern Jurisdictional Conference of the Methodist Church has set up a commission "charged with the responsibility of creating and executing a program of action [for] the elimination of racial injustices." The Detroit Methodist Conference, in the first action of its kind in the history of this denomination, invited Negro ministers and their congregations into full fellowship.

The Federal Council of Churches has issued a strong official statement on race relations and appointed a new commission with budget and power to develop programs. Catholic and Episcopal churches, with long histories of racial mingling in actual practice, have begun new programs for greater democracy, especially in the South. The National Conference of Christians and Jews has grown in influence; its education affects all minority groups.

Negroes have made great progress in the armed services and the merchant marine. They have been trained to fly the country's planes and have already engaged in a number of foreign missions. The Navy broke its long-standing tradition against the use of Negroes as anything but mess boys, and today has thousands of colored sailors and a few colored officers. At the last report the Coast Guard had 698 Negro officers and 4000 Negro men working and fighting side by side with their white fellows, without segregation and without friction.

On several of the Liberty ships the crews are mixed, and in a few instances white and black seamen serve under colored officers. In the heart of the South, white and Negro officer candidates have taken their training together, and many Army hospitals are serving Negro and white alike. Negro nurses are now accepted by the Army on a non-quota basis. And the Army has issued an order prohibiting discrimination at the post exchanges.

In spite of continued segregation and discrimination, the training and experience in the armed forces have been tremendous. A million Negroes — practically all the young men of the group between eighteen and thirty — have been given an education far beyond any school or college. They have been well housed and well fed. Their health has been safeguarded and their strength built up. They have been trained and disciplined — for the most part in wholesome fashion. They have seen other parts of the country and of the world. Along with slights, most soldiers have caught a glimpse of wide horizons and have had some warming experiences of respect and admiration as they have traveled over America, through the Pacific, and in Europe.

Coming back from such experience, the whole young male population of the race will never again fit into the serfdom of Southern feudalism or into second-class status in Northern industrial cities. It is too late ever again to keep Negroes "in their places." If we wanted that, we should never have drawn them into war production or called them to the tremendous education of the armed forces.

We now have the task — and the opportunity — of building Negroes, with all other citizens, into a common working force, which may then produce the highest standard of living ever known by any people; into a common culture, which will be enriched by the wisdom and ingenuity of this race as it has been by their art and music; into a common social and political order, which may then become a true democracy.

PROSE OR POETRY

by LORD DUNSANY

1

IT IS usually dangerous for anyone whose gift is one art to attempt to follow another. The pitfalls of following poetry when your gift is prose are obvious enough to be a byword, and a very common error is to follow the dramatic art for no better reason than that someone has written a successful novel, and has heard that managers pay better than publishers. Now, the difference between prose and the drama I can show you very easily. For instance, the novelist may write: "Far away to the left the sun was sinking under the hill, touching the tree-tops with pink and gold and orange, leaving long layers of crimson across the sky and turning stray clouds to purple" — and a great deal more; but the dramatist will write: "Sun sets left." The electrician, or whoever is responsible for the lighting in a theater, will do all the rest.

Yeats told me once that a play had been sent to him with the stage direction: "A bee buzzes across the evening, leaving a track of silence in its wake." The novelist had been at work there. But between prose and poetry I find it so difficult to define the line, that I have never known at what point prose strays over it. Therefore I cannot tell you where this line goes, nor can I define exactly what poetry is, or what prose is; I can only indicate a difference by saying that if a man who is writing prose strays into poetry it is rather as though at that moment he had become a little drunk; while if he is writing poetry and drops into prose it is as though the effects of a heavy meal of meat suddenly overtook him and he became dull and sleepy, without dreams.

I can only faintly indicate the difference by saying that in Ecclesiastes there is a melody in the words, and a frequent hurrying past of grand images, which from my earliest years has always suggested poetry to me, and does so still; whereas in the works of

Pope there is a certain precision, a scientific and philosophical logic, which has always seemed to me to be of the nature of prose. So the essential thing about poetry is neither rhyme nor meter, and yet all thoughts of a certain elevation appear to demand appropriate words for their dwelling. It is as though such thoughts were spirits that would not walk among men unless suitably clothed.

It is more than clothing; poetical thought is the spirit, and the rhythmic or metrical words in which they are told are the body, and together they walk among men; and when one is separated from the other they are both of them gone.

Definition of prose or poetry I have said I cannot give, but one indication I may give of the difference, which is that poetry is concerned more with truths, and prose with facts. And then what is the difference between these? A truth is a spiritual thing, a pure essence; whereas facts are concerned with matter. Imagine the feet of a spirit thickly covered with clay: it would be visible and audible as it walked. It is a fact that the 9.10 train from somewhere arrived somewhere else at 9.30; it is a truth to say that speed is beautiful, or dangerous. Facts, in short, are things done; truth is the inner significance of them, where they have significance; and I suppose that everything has if only one can find it; and finding it is the poet's job.

Once a man showed me the opening pages of a novel that he was writing, and he had something of a name. It began like this: "The mountains stretched away into the blue distance, rising up sheer from the sea, some of them over a thousand feet and one of them eleven hundred and twenty." I suggested his cutting out the measurements, which he did, but then I saw that I could help him no further, for every paragraph had something like this, and I had no time to rewrite the book for him.

What was wrong was that altitude, color and distance, mountains and sea, are all significant, and

Irish author, soldier, and squire, LORD DUNSANY, in lecturing before Trinity College, Dublin, delivered these remarks on the arts of prose and poetry.